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COMIC & CARD PICKS!

# VANTAGE

## COMIC & CARD PICKS

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#8

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# THE COMING X-DISASTER!

## PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER!

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"FIRST THERE WAS LADY DEATH, THEN SHI, AND NOW ASTER. KEEP AN EYE ON THIS ONE."

VANTAGE MAGAZINE
JULY, 1994

NEW FOIL COVER BY JAE LEE!

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INTRODUCING THE ART OF OLIVER ISABEDRA

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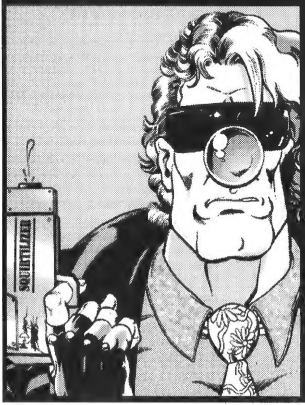


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VANTAGE™
COMIC & CARD PICKS
number eight

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**Vantage Comic & Card Picks**
**Volume One, Number 8,**
**December 1994.**

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logical analysis, and entertainment not generally availa
to the public.

## TOP PICK OF THE MONTH

**Aster** #3, 25% Edition (Entity/ Fractal Universe/ Oliver Isabedra)
**Uncanny X-Men Deluxe** #321 (Marvel/ X-Men/ After Xavier tie-in)
**X-Men Deluxe** #41 (Marvel/ X-Men/ After Xavier tie-in)
**Youngblood** #10 (Image/ Extreme/ Suicide of Chapel)

## MORE VANTAGE PICKS

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

**Classic X-Men** #13-16 (Marvel/ X-Men/ 1st M'Kraan crystal reprints)
**Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe** #1 (Big Ent./ Tekno•Comix/ 1st appearance)
**The Man Called A-X** #1-B (Malibu/ Bravura/ Shawn McManus)
**New Mutants** #25-28 (Marvel/ X-Men/ 1st Legion back-issues)
**Prophet** #7 (Image/ Extreme/ 1st Crypt)
**Spectacular Spider-Man** #221 (Marvel/ Clone Story/ Death of Octopus)
**Uncanny X-Men** #105-108 (Marvel/ X-Men/ 1st M'Kraan crystal back-issues)
**Uncanny X-Men** #280 (Marvel/ After Xavier/ Legion "winks out")
**The X-Files** #1 (Topps/ 1st appearance)
**X-Men: Alpha** #1 (Marvel/ X-Men/ After Xavier tie-in)
**Youngblood** #0 (Image/ Extreme/ 1st Link back-issue)
**Youngblood Strikefile** #10 (Image/ Extreme/ 1st Bloodpool)

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read! Open up one of those polybags and give comics a try!"

- Publisher Rob Golub

## WELCOME NEW READERS! HEY, WELCOME OLD ONES TOO!

Welcome! Welcome! For many of you, this is your first issue. Thanks to a very successful promotion, this issue of **Vantage** is appearing in hundreds of new stores for the first time!

What's that? Some of you are groaning? Hey! Cut that out! Who's doing that? Ahhh, its our long-time readers, those devils. They want **Vantage** all to themselves.

Oh, yes. We're not stupid over here at **Vantage** HQ. We know what the deal is. All of you regular readers want our circulation kept as low as possible. You all know that **Vantage** is the best kept secret in comics.

You remember how we completely jumped all over the clone story, giving you all the juicy details first. I'm still getting phone calls from thankful readers, excitedly telling me they pulled #149s out of dealer's boxes at five to ten dollars a pop.

You regular readers also remember how we were talking about Bill Tucci and Shi before anyone else. We had Shi on our cover before **Shi** #1 had even come out. Many dealers to this day tell me that we had a lot to do with Bill's success.

Oh, and you regular readers all know about how we were talking about Zero Hour months before anyone else. Of all the Zero Hour books that came out, those **Valors** we talked about were some of the only ones to shoot over cover price.

And now you want to be selfish and keep it all for yourselves, do you? Well now, that's not very fair is it?

In the interest of keeping all those moaners happy, I will say this... though **Vantage** is growing, our numbers are still reasonably small compared to the big boys. We'd like to keep it that way.

So, I suppose I've killed my two birds with one stone — current readers, be good and stop moaning at those nice new readers. And new readers, now that you've heard my plug, read on and experience the wonder of **Vantage.**

This is not just another almost-as-good-as-**Wizard**™ magazine. The other mags in the comics industry are great for their generalized approach. I enjoy them myself.

However, **Vantage** has its own distinctive, more specialized target-market. This is a magazine for intelligent adults who want early news and opinions... with a decidedly inside-info/market-place slant. If you're a dealer, retailer, or a thoughtful collector, you've come to the right place.

Read us through. Give us a shot. I'll bet you a clone's twin brother you'll be back in thirty.

*—**Rob Golub, Publisher** (No Cheese Here)*

## PROFESSOR X KILLED 30 YEARS AGO!

# HISTORY REWRITTEN!
# X-TITLES CANCELED!

The X-Universe is about to undergo major changes, including the murder of Professor X, the cancellation of all X-titles, and the creation of a new reality for the X-Men where the battle between humans and mutants rages fiercely, according to Marvel Comics sources.

In an unprecedented move, Marvel has decided to cancel every X-title, replacing each one with a new one in January. Each new replacement title will start out with a new first issue. X-Men, for example, will be canceled as of issue #321 in December, after which **Mutants** #1 comes out in January.

The change in titles is to emphasize the sudden change in X-history. Professor X is to be killed in the past, causing today's reality to suddenly change substantially.

Professor Xavier's son Legion, first introduced in **New Mutants** #26-28, will awaken from a coma and discover a new power which will enable him to travel back in time. This will lead Legion to the early days of friendship between Magneto and the professor, where he apparently intends to murder Magneto and change history forever.

Somehow, it is Professor X who gets killed, and this will suddenly alter the time stream. The professor dies in December (decades ago), well before the founding of his legendary team of mutants. His murder in the past will spell a very different future that will obviously have a devastating effect on current X-titles.

In January of 1995 Marvel mutant fans can expect the following current titles to be replaced by the following new ones:

1) **X-Men** is discontinued. In **Mutants** #1, we join Magneto and his premier team of mutants. **The Mutants** was the original title that Stan Lee had in mind for **The X-Men** in the '60s.
2) **Uncanny X-Men** is discontinued. In **Uncanny Mutants** #1, Magneto and his wife, Rogue, tend to their young son.
3) **Wolverine** is discontinued. In **Weapon X** #1 we meet the most dangerous mutant team of all: Logan and Jean Grey.
4) **X-Factor** is discontinued. In **Factor-X** #1, Cyclops betrays his father, Mr. Sinister!
5) **Excalibur** is discontinued. In **X-Calibre** #1, Nightcrawler and Mystique embark on a quest for the woman named Destiny. (Destiny! Will she help fix the time line somehow?)
6) **X-Force** is discontinued. In **Gambit and the X-Ternals** #1, Gambit and his lover, Lila Cheney, begin the biggest jewel heist of all — the theft of the M'Kraan crystal. [Editor's note: Marvel's first choice **X-Force** replacement was "**X-Posse**," but was later scrapped.]
7) **Generation X** is discontinued. In **The Mutants: Generation X #1**, Colossus and his wife, Kitty Pryde, discover that his long lost sister is in the slave pits. (Slave Pits!? Wow.)
8) **X-Men Unlimited** is discontinued. In **X-Men Chronicles** #1, we see how Magneto formed the Mutants.
9) **Cable** is discontinued. In **X-Man** #1, someone has escaped from the clone banks — Nathan Christopher Sommers!

X-MEN™

Buckle in because this looks like it's going to be one fantastic ride. Retailers can expect explosive new-issue sales on these number ones and for the lead-in books too. This thing is a store-owner's dream, and it should be a delicious read as well. As for picks? Read on, bub...

X-Men logo and artwork TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

# THE COMING X-DISASTER...
# PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER!

Of all the X-books due out in December, only a few stand out as the books to watch. **Vantage** has brought all of our sources, contacts, and collective noggins to bear on this one. Here's what we've got.

**X-Men: Alpha**, which "marks the occasion" of the Professor's death, will be a central starting point for readers of the #1s. It's an easy pick, but keep in mind that it will be ordered heavily. Also, how many books can you name with a $3.95 cover price that have ever gained enough market attention to travel at shows for more than cover? Not many, so this pick is no guarantee.

Keep in mind that the Professor may NOT die in Alpha. After all, Marvel only says that Alpha *marks the occasion of his death.* Indeed, sources tell **Vantage** that **X-Men** #41 **may be** the book where the good Professor dies! However, we must emphasize that this is unconfirmed as we go to press. We do know for sure that in #41 Legion successfully travels to the past, where he plans to slay Magneto. A youthful Charles Xavier tries to save Magneto, but he gets killed instead by mistake.

**Uncanny X-Men** #321 is also very appealing. Read what Marvel wrote about #321: "Events occurring in this December's issue of **Uncanny X-Men** are about to change the reality of the Marvel Universe in general." This is the only book that Marvel singles out as responsible for changing reality! Thus, it appears that **Uncanny X-Men** #321 will play a major role in the coming changes, well beyond the level of push Marvel is devoting to the book.

Marvel won't say much more about #321, but they will tell us that Lilandra returns to Earth with a startling revelation about the end of the universe. Also in #321, the **X-Men** are to scurry "back to the past" to prevent Legion from altering the future.

We don't have all the answers, but one thing does seem certain. **Uncanny X-Men** #321 and **X-Men** #41 will be two of the key books serving as the origin of this new X-universe. Fans who jump on board after the fact will be looking for these books.

Note that the other X-books shipping this month are also supposed to lead into January, but that they seem much wimpier about the whole thing. For example, in **X-Force,** Shatterstar and Rictor enjoy a night out on the town. Yawn. Based on the information we have, **X-Men, Uncanny X-Men,** and **X-Men: Alpha** are the books to watch in December.

Legion TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

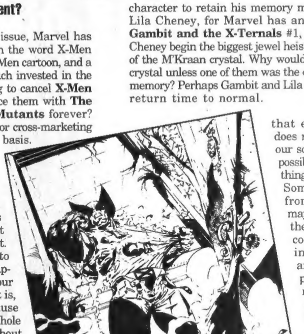
# THE BIG X-QUESTIONS... AND SOME ANSWERS!

## Is This All Permanent?

Yeah, right. As we said last issue, Marvel has 1500 products on the market with the word X-Men plastered all over them, plus an X-Men cartoon, and a coming X-Men movie. With so much invested in the word X-Men, Marvel is now going to cancel **X-Men** and **Uncanny X-Men** and replace them with **The Mutants** and **The Uncanny Mutants** forever? Obviously, this would make for poor cross-marketing and slower sales on a long-term basis. Short-term, **Vantage** thinks these title changes are brilliant, but keeping them long-term would be, to be blunt, incredibly stupid. We have more faith in Marvel than that. If the old titles don't come back, save this page, cut it out, mail it to us, and we'll eat it.

We're really not supposed to know this, and we're really not supposed to tell you, but hey, that's our job, right? Sorry, Marvel. The fact is, we're not eating anything, because inside sources tell us that this whole X-disaster gets wrapped up in about four months.

In fact, **X-Men: Alpha** will be one of a pair of book-ends. The close to the whole storyline will be called **X-Men: Omega,** due out about four months later. This all comes to us from inside sources close to this mega-X-project. So for those of you who are worried you may now need to unload some X-backstock due to the deflation that comes from title cancellations, hold your horses. Relax. No need for X-panic. Our sources do tell us that the original X-books are coming back.



Wolverine TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

## What Will the New Reality Be Like?

The new reality will feature the Earth's mutants loosely organized under the leadership of Magneto. Magneto tries to care for his mutants as best he can, but doesn't do a very good job of it.

The world will be a much nastier place for mutants. The storyline in January, when all of these new #1s are due out, will be called "After Xavier: The Age of Apocalypse." It appears that our mutant friends may have to contend with something vaguely similar to the famous Days of Future Past storyline from ye old **Uncanny X-Men** issues. (That's where we got this month's cover from — **Uncanny X-Men** #141, one of the coolest covers ever.)

## How Will Time Be Returned to Normal?

One of the current family of X-characters will be aware of the fact that time has been altered, according to inside sources. This somehow relates to a mysterious crystal, sources tell **Vantage.** This leads **Vantage** to deduce that the X-character to retain his memory may be Gambit Lila Cheney, for Marvel has announced that **Gambit and the X-Ternals** #1, Gambit and Li Cheney begin the biggest jewel heist of all — the th of the M'Kraan crystal. Why would they go after t crystal unless one of them was the one to retain sor memory? Perhaps Gambit and Lila will be the ones return time to normal.

However, no that even when tir does return to norma our sources tell us it possible that not ever thing will change ba Some new elemen from "After Xavie may stick with us the long haul. We continue to dig f info on all of th and we'll keep y posted. In t meantime, keep eye on **Uncan X-Men #105-1** and on any oth books that lo like they mig lead into th crystal thir

***"Readers find out who's more powerful when Wolverine challenges Sabretooth to a final confrontation."***

## Will Wolverine or Sabretooth Die?

Marvel, on mid-December's **Wolverine #** " ... readers find out who's more powerful wh [Wolverine] challenges Sabretooth to a final confron tion." Sounds pretty final, eh? T is an opportunity for Marvel stage a battle to the death betwe their two big rivals, for the lo can come back to life when t time-shift thing is all over. don't know for sure if they'll figh the death, but **Vantage** sure d hope so, just for the sheer fun o

New Mutants TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

## Are the Early Legion Books Good Picks?

The first appearance of Leg **(New Mutants** #25-28) sho back-issue promise, but there's interesting hitch. Obviously, w Legion starting the whole X-dis

## THE BIG X-QUESTIONS... (continued)

ter in motion, interest in his early appearances could boom upward. This would especially be true if, after the death of Professor X, we were to see Legion feeling guilty, trying to fix things, going crazy Hal Jordan-style, or something along those lines. We have no way of knowing whether this will happen, for Marvel remains so tight-lipped we think they'll need some serious Chap-Stick soon.

What's interesting is that Legion may become irrelevant immediately upon Professor X's death, for Legion is the Professor's son. Depending on when Legion was consummated, the boy may cease to exist the moment the professor is killed in December. In other words, we have a lot to think about and no results for this one.

Let's face it. This is a pick from Hell. Do you think Marvel comes up with this stuff saying to each other, "Oh, yeah, this'll drive those **Vantage** guys crazy!" ?

### Will It All Suck?

**X-Men: Alpha** writer Mark Waid, who attended the secret X-writer's conference to help put this whole thing together, says it definitely will not suck. "It's a really good story," Waid excitedly told **Vantage.** "I was skeptical at first just like everybody else — I thought, 'Oh, it's just a sales stunt,' but when I learned more about it, I campaigned to be in."

Legion TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.


COMING SOON...

#1995!

THE 1995 PUBLISHER SPECIAL FROM VANTAGE

# THE LOST STORY OF THE M'KRAAN CRYSTAL

The M'Kraan crystal will play an important role in the upcoming "After Xavier" storyline, say sources close to Marvel. **Vantage** has gone over the history of the crystal carefully, and we've come up with some very interesting information.

The original story of the M'Kraan crystal is hidden in older back-issues — **Uncanny X-Men** #105-108 to be exact. Long forgotten, these old back-issues introduce and explain some of the background behind this crystal that is destined to have a major impact on the After Xavier storyline. (For those of you who want to read the story and save a couple bucks, **Vantage** suggests you check the bargain boxes for the reprints: **Classic X-Men** #13-16.)

Dust off these old comic book treasures and you'll find a story that kicks off with Lilandra leading a revolt against her brother. She battles him for control of the Shi'ar empire.

The X-Men materialize on an alien world where the M'Kraan crystal is located, to help Lilandra fight for it.

It's there that, when nine stars fall into alignment, the crystal will "open." It's supposed to grant ultimate power, and that's why Lilandra's brother wants it, and that's exactly why Lilandra led a rebellion against him. She's afraid of what this ultimate power will do once unleashed, since the crystal will bring about "The End Of All That Is."

During the ensuing battle, the crystal opens and reality blinks, and everything that is "isn't" for that blink — it's felt and noticed on earth, too. Next, one of the guardians of the crystal appears, a tiny-looking being named Jahf. Logan attacks the little guy. Jahf sends him sailing into orbit with one punch. Banshee figures out that Jahf's a robot and defeats him with a sonic scream.

Then an even larger and more powerful guardian, Modt, appears, telling them that even if they defeat him, another guardian will come, even more powerful than Modt. The X-Men are stunned for a moment, and while all this is going on, the Emperor has gotten close to the crystal.

One of the Star Jammers, Raza, furiously goes after the Emperor and in his fury, throws him at the crystal. Then the Star Jammers, the X-Men, and everybody else gets sucked into the crystal, but nobody realizes that this has happened. They find themselves in a desolate landscape like a deserted city. Nearby is a huge glowing sphere. Jean's the one to figure out they're inside the crystal and she touches the sphere.

The crystal assails all of them with its own defenses, sending nightmares of what they fear most into their minds. Because Jean has, in some way, already faced what she feared most (death), she's not affected. Scott's powers g berserk while he's affecte because he loses what litt control he had, so she hel him, by rendering him unco scious. She sees that one Scott's blasts broke th sphere. Finally, Jean da gerously reaches into th life force of the X-Men f the power to close the cry tal.

When that's don everyone finds then selves outside the cryst again, and the crystal is closed. Lilandra brother is rendered insane by the experience ar the rest of the Shi'ar decide he was mad to eve attempt to gain the M'Kraan crystal's power in th first place.

In 1995, Gambit and Lila Cheney will search f this powerful crystal that is so deeply embedded "real" X-history. Since Professor X will be dead, w that mean that Lilandra's brother succeeded in h attempt to harness the power of the crystal? Is th why Marvel has announced that Lilandra will foret the end of the world? Does the crystal somehow ha the power to set things right?

Only time will tell, but we do know for sure th the crystal is very powerful and that it will play a k role in the X-Men storyline. Keep an eye out for cr tal books, as picks and fascinating reads! The mo **Vantage** learns about "The Age of Apocalypse", t more excited we get! Make ours Marvel!

*Anush Yegyazanian contributed to this article.*

# EXTREME™

## ON-PANEL SUICIDE!

### HALF OF CHARACTERS TO DIE "FOR GOOD"!

Some Extreme titles will be canceled, one major character will commit suicide on panel, and over half of Extreme's characters will die in the upcoming "End of Extreme" storyline, according to Extreme Studios sources.

This will happen as a direct result of events building up over the last two years. The "End of Extreme" storyline will tie up loose plot threads as it touches every part of the Extreme universe in the months to come.

**Two mysterious characters, Link and Crypt, come back from the future to "kill everybody." This will lead to the deaths of over half of the Extreme stable of characters, and it is intended to be permanent.**

It is a little known fact that if the various Image studios were to break up, Extreme Studios might be the third largest publisher in comics, after Marvel and DC. Extreme regularly has about a five percent share of the market or higher.

So when Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios does something, take it seriously.

Two mysterious characters, Link and Crypt, come back from the future to "kill everybody," our Extreme source tells us. This will lead to the deaths of over half of the Extreme stable of characters, and it is intended to be permanent.

Some titles will be canceled as a result of these deaths, possibly including **Team Youngblood,** which would be replaced by **Bloodpool. Troll** is also to get the ax, and even **Youngblood** was almost nixed, but Image decided to keep it at the last minute.

Youngblood and Extreme Image TM & © 1994 Extreme Studios

## HALF OF CHARACTERS TO DIE! (continued)

While our source cannot rule out changes in editorial decisions, Extreme plans to leave their dead characters dead. They pride themselves on the fact that their dead characters tend to stay dead, and Extreme has no intention of bringing their dead characters back in a few months, our sources added.

With Link and Crypt having such a tremendous impact on the Extreme universe, their first appearances obviously become of interest. Link's first appearance is in the old **Youngblood** #0 backissue, and Crypt first appears as part of the big "End of Extreme" storyline in **Prophet** #7. It should be out by the time you read this.

However, the most important book to watch may be **Youngblood** #10, where Chapel blows his head off! Yes, in a controversial move, Extreme is going to have Chapel kill himself as a major lead-in for this big "End of Extreme" storyline!

Chapel dies at his own hands in **Youngblood** #10, after which he goes to Hell. He'll come back to Earth as something similar to a Spawn. He'll challenge Lucifer, thinking that he can rule Hell! Chapel will seek to become Lord of Hell and King of the Earth! Chapel sends Link and Crypt back in time from the future to slaughter the Extreme universe. Thus, Chapel kicks off the whole "End of Extreme" storyline!

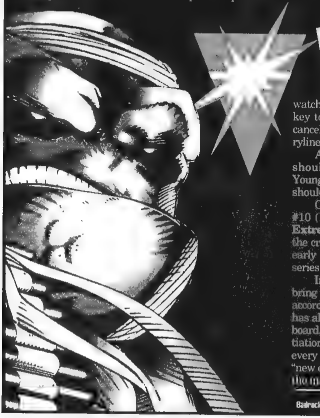
**Vantage** sources in the know feel that **Youngblood** #10 is the most important pick to watch. We are told that **Youngblood** #10 is a major key to understanding the reasons behind the title cancellations, the new titles, the deaths, and the storyline in general.

### Will Chapel's Head Really Be Blown Off?

The answer is: Oh yeah.

Stephen Platt created the breakdown draft for a two-page spread where Chapel literally blows his brains out, graphically splattering them across the page! Liefeld is penciling the page, which will appear in **Youngblood** #10. In the issue, Chapel tells Al Simmons (Spawn) that he wants to become as powerful as a Spawn, by coming back from the dead as Spawn did. It is at this point that he commits suicide on panel. Wow. The entire "End of Extreme" storyline will relate back to this suicide.

If anything will get the pro-censorship people to take note, this one's it. As far as we know, an on-panel, graphically depicted suicide is unprecedented for Image, and probably for the other mainstream publishers as well. Image is considering bagging the book or labeling it as not for children.




Also, keep in mind that the controversy alone should build demand for this book. Many Youngblood readers are children. **Youngblood** #10 should be on the rack by the time you read this.

Other books to watch: **Youngblood Strikefile** #10 (December, first appearance of Bloodpool); **Extreme Sacrifice Prelude** (January, kicks off the crossover); **Team Youngblood** #16 (December, early Bloodpool appearance). The new **Bloodpool** series will launch in early 1995.

In other Extreme news, the company plans to bring on more top-grade professional comics writers, according to sources close to the company. Jo Duffy has already signed on, Shooter is almost for-sure on board, and others of similar stature are now in negotiations with Extreme. Extreme wants to pair up every artist with a big name writer as part of their "new outlook," our source said. "We're responding to the market," our source added.

Badrock and Chapel's Head TM & © 1994 Extreme Studios

## PRINT RUNS STAY STEADY, PUBLISHER BATTLE REMAINS FIERCE!

The month of October was filled with a few print run surprises and a great deal of market share battle. We bring you the rankings as reported by Capital City distribution, along with our own estimate of the accompanying print runs. Our thanks go out to Capital City. Please note that these print run estimates are exactly that — our own estimates. Our estimates are for "direct sale," or comic store copies only.

The top seller in October was **X-Men Deluxe** #39, with a healthy 380,000 copies. Though still low for a book in the number one spot, three quarters of a million dollars in sales is nothing to scoff at. In contrast, **X-Men** #39 (Regular), which sells for fifty cents cheaper two weeks later without the fancy paper, came in low at 39/45,000, as was expected.

**Spawn** #19 and #20 came in at 2/375,000 and 3/370,000 respectively, as McFarlane continued to show the industry who is boss. Playing games like skipping an issue number and coming out with two at the same time appears to have done nothing to slow this juggernaut down.

The rest of the top ten list was as follows: **Generation X Deluxe** #2 (4/365,000), **Uncanny X-Men Deluxe** #319 (5/350,000), **Wolverine Deluxe** #88 (6/305,000), **Bishop Deluxe** #1 (7/300,000), **Team 7** #1 (8/240,000), **Batman vs. Predator II** (9/230,000), **X-Men Unlimited** #7 (10/205,000).

Another title of interest, **Amazing Spider-Man** #396, on its way to that big #400 clone event, came in at (20/175,000). In fact, all of the books between eleven and thirty-eight were Marvel and DC books. The Image books took up many of the top thirty-nine to top sixty-five spots, coming in at 70,000 to 125,000. **Flash** #96 was ordered surprisingly low at 82/70,000, but DC has reported that they overprinted #96, along with some other post-Zero books, in anticipation of increased demand.

**Ultraforce** #2 hit 128/51,000, which means there should be only about 13,000 in print with the variant cover. The Valiant titles again sank slightly. **X-O Manowar,** for example, hit 103/60,000. **Aster** #1 from Entity, having been heavily promoted by Entity and pushed by **Vantage,** did well for an independent. The book hit 189/40,000.

## COUPON, COVER SPLIT FOR ASTER #3!

In a bold move, Entity Comics has decided to produce **Aster** #3 with a split cover, with the 25% edition of the book containing an exclusive valuable coupon.

Sources close to Entity have indicated that **Aster** #3, drawn by hot new artist Oliver Isabedra, will ship with two different covers. Seventy-five [illegible] will arrive in stores with on[illegible] and the other twenty-five per[illegible] with another Isabedra cover. These will be the first of his covers ever to be published.

With several [illegible] books having made the top ten list, the split-cover concept's honeymoon seems to be coming to an end. Thus, **Vantage** applauds Entity's decision to add a valuable coupon to the twenty-five percent cover version only. This is sure to spice up the more limited cover, and to create strong demand for the book.

The coupon will be good for something very special from Entity Comics. Exactly what the goodie will be remains a secret, but **Vantage** thinks we know what it is. We don't want to say until we are sure, but it could very well knock your socks off.

Artist Oliver Isabedra is the hot young artist from the Philippines with no formal art training. Though he's never been to the U.S., he loves American comics, and he draws a very appealing page.

There's also a surprise in **Aster** #1, due out now. Flip though it — you may see something that reminds you of your old friend, **Vantage.**

Aster ™ & © 1994 Entity Comics

# VANTAGE QUICKIES

## George Perez Sticks with Ultraforce

George Perez has signed a contract to pencil every issue of Malibu's **Ultraforce** up to issue #12. This is a coup for Malibu, say sources close to the company. Malibu and Image/Maximum Press have been competing with each other for as much of the artist's attention as possible, our sources say.

## Is Malibu For Sale?

Rumors that Malibu is for sale remain unconfirmed. However, our usually friendly and talkative Malibu sources are kindly avoiding the question. Something is up.

## Shut Down Before They Got Started

Before even publishing a single comic, Silver Moon Comics, a division of Full Moon Entertainment, has shut down. Parent company Full Moon Entertainment calls the move temporary. You may remember that **Vantage** was excited about the prospect of this successful video production company's foray into comics. After a year of talk, renting table space at the trade shows, and hiring employees, the launch has now been canceled.

***After a year of talk, renting table space at the trade shows, and hiring employees, the launch has now been canceled.***

Full Moon Entertainment logo™ & © 1994 Full Moon Entertainment

Malibu logo and Ultraforce ™ & © 1994 Malibu Entertainment Comics

## Godwheel Is A Cool Name

**Malibu** should get an award for the cool miniseries name. Coming up soon is **Godwheel.** T Ultraverse four-issue series will focus on five evil in viduals: Rune, NecroMantra, Primevil, L Pumpkin, and Argus.

Godwheel is a mysterious realm of myth, ul science, and magic that's played a part in virtu every Ultraverse series — whether readers knew i not! It is on the Godwheel that these five badd unite to forever alter the Ultraverse. Malibu t **Vantage** that repercussions will be felt in the regu Ultraverse titles throughout the beginning of 19 **Godwheel** #0 kicks the whole thing off in Janu with the resurrection of Argus, an arrogant young eager to seize power. He travels to his former ho the Godwheel, to recruit the five Ultra-badd Primevil, who will be to Prime as Venom is to Spi Man, will be introduced in **Godwheel** #1.

**Vantage** thinks the name alone will incre sales for this thing considerably. To add spice to mix, there'll be artwork from Image's Mark Pac (Doom's IV).

## Ominous Press Suspends Publication

Ominous Press has shut down and has suspen publication. The company says it may still resume p lication at a later date. Bart Sears told **Vantage,** " difficult comic book market will not allow us to fulfill goals that we had set for our company and ourselv

# VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

## Ooops! Vantage Messes Up!

Okay, okay, stop writing, calling, faxing, and overnighting us about it! We know! We goofed! Now you know what we knew all along: **Vantage** ain't perfect.

As you figured, last issue our top pick was the twenty-five percent edition of **Ultraforce** #2, not **Prime** #2! Obviously, **Vantage** has become confused by all of this time travel and all of those issue-numbering gimmicks. So we'll sit down now… sort it all out… take a break. Ahhhh… Okay, back to work!

## New York Con to Benefit Multiple Sclerosis

On November 12 there'll be a big comic and gaming con on Long Island, with an auction benefiting Multiple Sclerosis.

**Vantage** is donating various goodies for the auction and we encourage all of you Long Islanders out there to hop on the "L.I.E." (we had to show off our "G-Island" knowledge) and go buy something for a good cause.

## Big Changes for Zen!

"Big and incredibly exciting changes are in the wind for Zen," says Entity Comics Publisher Don Chin. In early 1995, Zen's life will take on an "unexpected direction," Chin told **Vantage.**

"The new **Zen** series that Entity Comics is launching in early '95 brings him back to his roots, as a solitary warrior on a quest for the meaning of life," Zen co-creator Dan Cote told **Vantage.**

Zen's that blue warrior guy who beats up on bad guys with an air of Stan and Jack about him. Zen will return to his original role, as a solitary soldier of fortune.

## New Books Based on Magic the Gathering

**Arena,** a novel based on Magic the Gathering, arrives in book stores nationwide as you read this. There'll soon be three more Magic books that form a trilogy.

William Forstchen is the author of **Arena,** having previously had seventeen books published. "The climax of the novel," he said, "was inspired by a chaotic time in Constantinople when deadly riots broke out over a miscalled chariot race."

## Vantage Thinks The Visitor is a Cow

December heralds the arrival of Valiant's 18th series, **The Visitor.** The mysterious stranger first appeared in Chaos Effect Alpha as a hooded guest of the priests of Ladakh.

Writer Kevin VanHook told **Vantage,** "During the melee in **The Visitor vs. The Valiant Universe,** The Visitor takes on the likes of X-O Manowar, Solar, The Armorines, Ninjak, The Secret Weapons, and Bloodshot. The question arises even among Valiant's finest, 'Who or what is the Visitor?' A lot of readers think that they know who the Visitor is. He is definitely a character that you've seen before! But his (or her) identity won't be revealed for some time."

The mystery of the Visitor's identity is the hottest item on Valiant's menu right now, and **Vantage** is not the least bit surprised that it's still being milked. (Maybe the Visitor is a cow.) **Vantage** bets we'll all be left guessing the Visitor's identity for quite some time.

# VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

## The Harbinger Wars Loom on the Horizon

Straight from the pages of **Rai** #0, Valiant presents one of the darkest chapters of human history. The three-issue story arc in **Timewalker** #6 through #8 brings the horrifying reality of The Harbinger Wars to the Valiant Universe.

Timewalker travels to the early 21st century where Toyo Harada has assembled a formidable army to ensure the future of Harbinger rule over humans. Writer Kevin VanHook said, "This is not an alternate future story. The story spans hundreds of years of Valiant history. It's going to be the real thing!"

## Star Trek: Voyager Series To Air

The new **Star Trek: Voyager** TV show will sprint forth from the ongoing conflict between Cardassians and Federation colonists (the Maquis). A Federation ship and a Maquis ship will be hurled to the far side of the galaxy by something akin to the Bermuda Triangle. More than a lifetime from home, the crews of the two ships band together in a shaky alliance to try to find a way home.

The **Star Trek: Voyager** comic series from Malibu will tie in with the new **Star Trek: Voyager** TV show, which is to air in January on the new United/Paramount network. About 90% of homes will be reached by stations already signed up.

The cast for **Star Trek: Voyager** will include: Kathryn Janeway, Captain U.S.S. Voyager (a woman!); Tuvok, the first black Vulcan; and Doc Zimmerman, a dead physician whose holographic image is often consulted.

## Captain Kirk To Die!

This month, **Star Trek: Generations** opens at theaters all over the nation. Captain Kirk is reputed to die in the film, which features characters from both the old and the "Next Generation" cast.

## Keep An Eye On Spectacular Spider-Man #221

Just a few days before Christmas, Marvel will come out with **Spectacular Spider-Man** #221, which will contain an unusual gift... the death of Doctor Octopus.

Marvel: "This issue marks the most shocking death of all! ...Doctor Octopus battles a mortally ill Spidey for the last time. One dies — and readers will not believe which!"

Well, sources say it won't be Spidey, so we believe it. Of course, it's unlikely this will be permanent, but #221 is certainly an issue worth picking up.

## Cover Split for The Man Called A-X #1

**The Man Called A-X** #1 will arrive in stor with an unannounced cover split, according to Malib

Due out as you read this, the 75% cover versio marked as #1-A features A-X on the cover. The 25 version, also due out now, features a "mystery cove our Malibu sources tell us. It will be marked #1- Sheesh! 1-A, A-X, 1-B! We thought we were do with algebra.

**The Man Called A-X** is the story of someo who wakes up and doesn't remember who he i where he is, or what he is supposed to do. Soun like a non-**Vantage** reader, eh?

Written by Marv Wolfman (!), with art by Shaw McManus.

## Badrock/Violator Crossover

**Vantage** has learned that Alan Moore h agreed to write a Badrock/Violator miniseries or on shot, to be released in the Spring of 1995. The arti has not yet been named.

## The Other Legion Book

Want more Legion than just those **Ne Mutants** early appearances? Check out the Shado King saga, where the Shadow King mind-melds wi Legion's frail mind. In the end, the professor defea the Shadow King/Legion. However, in the conclusi to the Shadow King saga (**Uncanny X-Men** #28 the professor fails to save his son's mind and the boy mind "winks out."

## VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

FLASHBACK COMICS
ALL NEW! NO REPRINTS!
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FOOLISH HUMAN! YOU DARE THINK YOUR PUNY WORLDS ARE A MATCH FOR MORGUUT!!
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1 ALIENS & COWBOYS BOOK!
THE WILD WEST TAKES AN OTHERWORLDLY MENACE IN A TITANIC TALE WE COULD ONLY CALL...
COWBOYS AND ALIENS!
Bizarre Fantasy ™ & © 1994 Flashback Comics

### Flashback Comics Goes After Nostalgia

Flashback Comics has targeted an untapped market, the market for nostalgia. This new comic publisher will attempt to capture the look and feel of the old Science Fiction and Monster comics of the 50's and 60's. **Vantage** applauds any attempt to segment the market, as Flashback, Tekno, and Paradox Press have done. This is the future of comic book marketing.

### Tekno•Comix Launches a Third Book

Young, new, money-bags of a company Tekno•Comix now launches its third number one. **Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe** was his final creation before his passing. In the first issue, explorers journey to a devastated planet. They search for lost secrets kept by "The Old Ones."

As the creator of **Star Trek**, there's no doubt that this late creator's work will be something to fall in love with. Tekno certainly has the money to promote the book heavily, and they've done so without hesitation.

The company's push into an untapped market, non-hero sci-fi, could very well pay off for them. Keep an eye on this company and on its launch. This is one to watch.

### Jeff Smith and Jim Lee Swap Covers

Two highly respected pros have agreed to an unprecedented swap. Jeff Smith, creator of **Bone** and winner of four Eisner Awards, will draw the cover to **WildC.A.T.s Adventures Sourcebook**. In return, Jim Lee will do a pin-up for **Bone** featuring Fone Bone as a member of the WildC.A.T.s.

### Big Names with August House

Check this out: **The Dark** #1 comes with a cover drawn by George Perez and **Eudaemon's** Nelson, and bound into the book will be "character card" by Bart Sears! Wow. The "character card" will be about twice the size of a postcard. Also, **The Dark** #1 will feature "overfoil," a foil laid down before printing the cover, to create an even more dazzling piece.

Keep an eye on this under-publicized company and on its exciting new relaunch. Due out in January 1995.

## VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

### The X-Files Gets a Comic Book

The truth is out there. Now too is the Topps Comics series.

From the cult favorite FOX TV show comes **The X-Files**, the only studio-authorized comic series based on the show. The show is a hit. Though it's unlikely the comic will make the top ten lists, look for consistent fan demand. This one could do well, `a la Star Trek and Star Wars comics.

### Can You Find Concrete: Killer Smile #1?

"No such animal!" said Lou Bank, Dark Horse Vice President of sales and marketing. "I've been asking around, and it seems that there isn't a comics specialty store on the face of this planet that still has copies of **Concrete: Killer Smile** #1!"

Bank doesn't believe any exist, and, says Dark Horse, he's as cocky as a sixteen-year-old who just passed the driver's exam. So he has issued a challenge. "Call me, fax me, write me! Show me a store that's sitting on **Killer Smile** #1s, and I'll give you something really cool! I don't know what, but my office is just brimming with keen things, all looking for a home!"

Well **Vantage** readers, being the experienced pick-hunters that you are, poor Lou Bank at Dark Horse could wind up with a bare office shortly. We'll have to agree with Concrete creator Paul Chadwick on this one: "I don't know about this."


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*The local comic shop is your personal connection to the world of comics! It needs YOUR support to keep bringing you truly awesome entertainment! Shop there often! Tell 'em* ***Vantage*** *sent you!*

VANTAGE

The Mask ™ & © 1994 Dark Horse Comics

### Dark Horse Holds onto the Number Four Slot

With Marvel, DC, and Image each having take a firm hold of their market share places in that orde the fourth position has been up for grabs. Malibu Valiant, and Dark Horse have been battling for i

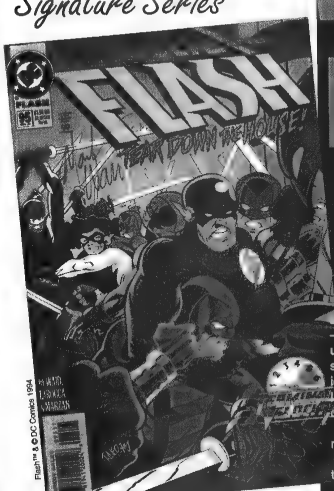
Dark Horse declared themselves the winners i a recent press release. For four months in a row no Dark Horse has edged out their competitors for th number four position. According to Capital Cit Distribution, Dark Horse had a 5.74% share i October.

Dark Horse Publisher Mike Richardson tol **Vantage**, "I'm incredibly pleased to see how support ive our retail and distribution friends have been an how they're sticking with us."

### A New Look for Batman

As Bruce Wayne returns to the Batman family books, he'll do so with an exciting new look, says D Comics. Of upcoming plans, Gerard Jones note "We'll see why Batman is ethically so important Gotham. They spent the last year showing how bad is to have someone like Azrael around, so I think w have to spend some time showing why we're s relieved he's back."

# VANTAGE™
## Signature Series




# FLASH #95

Own a signed and limited piece of Flash history! **Flash** #95 is the intro book for the hot Terminal Velocity storyline that fans have been raving about. The storyline introduces us to Impulse, an important new part of the Flash legend!

Writer Mark Waid has made a real name for himself, writing the sort of story that fans pick up to read over and over. Waid has also used his newfound fame to land one of the biggest writing assignments in comics: **X-Men: Alpha**!

For a very special piece of **Flash** history, signed by this incomparable writer, Vantage is the place to be! $9.95! We really must be crazy this time!

# SIGNED
## MARK WAID
# LIMITED
## ONLY 200 COPIES
# $9.95
## ARE WE CRAZY??

*Vantage* has made special arrangements to subsidize the costs of producing signed comics — we are passing the savings on to you, our valued customers! Don't ever pay $30-$60 for a signed book again! *Vantage Signature Series* comics are signed and strictly limited to unfathomably low quantities, and are truly affordable! The catch? There's two of 'em:

1) You must use the coupon provided– no copies.

2) If we receive over 200 orders we will return checks at random (sorry, we have no choice)!

OFFER EXPIRES JANUARY 15, 1995.

Yes, I'd like *Flash #95*, personally signed by writer Mark Waid, limited to 200 produced by **Vantage**, with accompanying certificate of authenticity! I understand that if **Vantage** receives orders for over 200 copies, my coupon and money may be selected at random to be returned (I will receive a full refund).

Enclosed is $9.95 + $2.00 (shipping)= $11.95 total
Canadian orders add 40%. All other foreign, add U.S. $2.00.

Name: _____

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Please send check or money order
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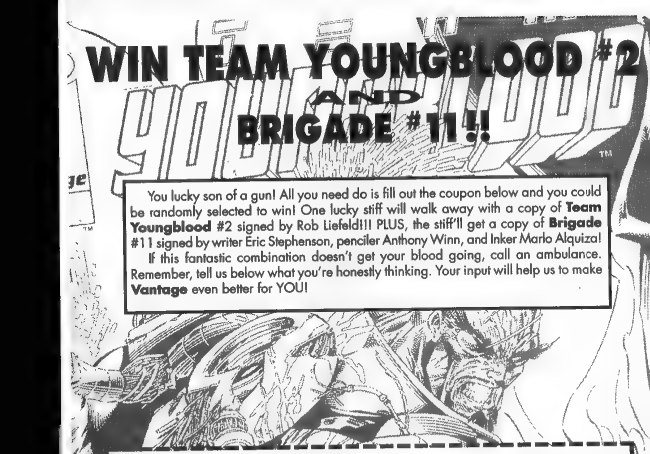
**Vantage Signature Series, Dept. FL**
**13000 W. Blue Mound Road, #110**
**Elm Grove, WI 53122**

# WIN TEAM YOUNGBLOOD #2 AND BRIGADE #11!!



You lucky son of a gun! All you need do is fill out the coupon below and you could be randomly selected to win! One lucky stiff will walk away with a copy of **Team Youngblood** #2 signed by Rob Liefeld!!! PLUS, the stiff'll get a copy of **Brigade** #11 signed by writer Eric Stephenson, penciler Anthony Winn, and Inker Mario Alquiza!

If this fantastic combination doesn't get your blood going, call an ambulance. Remember, tell us below what you're honestly thinking. Your input will help us to make **Vantage** even better for YOU!

**YES!!!** **I want to win Team Youngblood #2 signed by THE MAN and Brigade #11 signed by OTHER MEN!!!**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ AGE (OPTIONAL) _____

Three back-issue comics I might buy soon:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Three back-issue comics I recently purchased (and their prices):

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

☐ (Optional) Hey, **Vantage,** as long as I'm writing you I'd like to get a trial box of Comic Book Checklist Cards! Enclosed is a check for $8.85 plus $2.00 shipping ($10.85 total) for seventy-five Vantage Comic Book Checklist Cards. These cards are trading card sized for easy display in binders, etc.

☐ (Optional) Hey **Vantage,** as long as I'm writing you, here's my quick two cents for Vantage Viewpoints! I want you to know what my dream crossover would be, what I think of this month's news, what I'm having for dinner tonight, or some other pointless drivel:

_____

_____

_____

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# NON-SPORTS PICKS

**VANTAGE Card Picks**

- Death SkyDisc from Vertigo Cards
- Sealed Boxes of Ultra X-Men 1995
- FPG Colossal Autographed Cards

## DON'T WINK AT ME!

Last year's Sandman cards created a stir, successfully bringing a new card size to the non-sports market and showing that while most card sets tied to DC characters have trouble in the marketplace, cards from a small DC niche could sell out. This year we get the Vertigo set, and while **Vantage** is impressed with the cards, we don't see them selling as well as the Sandman set.

Many of the characters may be familiar to readers of DC's adult horror line, but none of them have the following of Sandman. The cards are sure to be impressive (nearly half of the ninety cards are cover art), but most collectors will have no clue as to what the set is. There is, however, one card that is likely to be the single hottest non-sports card of the year: SD4, the Death SkyDisc.

Most serious collectors see the limited SkyDiscs as something they must have, and the character on the cards is not important to them (although the use of Batman and Superman on the first three discs helped get them going). At the same time, there are readers of Sandman who think that Death is simply the best character ever, and they will want the multi-image picture of Death, sitting beside a tombstone and winking at the viewer, whatever the cost.

This card should easily out-distance the Sandman hologram (which was a highly collectible but disappointing card) in terms of price, demand, and getting attention. While **Vantage** tends not to encourage hoarding, you may do very well indeed if you actively pursue this card when the cards first appear, and you should have no problem selling or trading them for a tidy profit later on.

*"Likely to be the single hottest non-sport card of the year!"*

## AN XCELLENT CHOICE, SIR

The top news in comics is the time travel storyline that kills Professor X of the X-Men, and the top news in cards is the time travel trick that allows the Fleer Ultra X-Men 1995 cards to arrive in stores in December, just in time for (groan) X-mas. Every time an X-Men card set comes out, everybody orders very heavily, and yet the cards sell out quickly. **Vantage** sees no reason to expect any differences in the release of the newest X-set.

Fleer is continuing its pattern of offering zillions of chase cards — not only are there three different chase card sets, this time there are also three different formats for them (Power-Blasts, Suspended Animation, and Chromium Cards). The increased use of frequent chase cards (averaging one chase card in every two packs, and the existence of special boxes from Wal-Mart with a chase card in every pack) has had an interesting effect on the market for Marvel cards. **Vantage** has noticed that sales of sets have just about stopped, and very few chase cards are being sold as single

cards — why buy a chase card when the same amount of money gets you enough packs to virtually guarantee another chase card that you either need or can trade? As a result, the best way to increase value for the recent Fleer Marvel cards has been to keep sealed boxes. Since dealers can sell packs more readily than single cards, packs is what they demand. The ease with which chase cards could be found and removed from several recent Fleer comic sets has made dealers (and many consumers) leery of loose packs, so sealed boxes are the best bet. Of course, you should open at least one box so you can have a set of the cards to look at and show off — cards in nine pocket sheets are a lot more fun than sealed boxes. And to hold your cards, don't forget to pick up your official Ultra X-Men binder, which comes with three random MasterPrint-type cards (about 6 inches by 10 inches).

## FROM OVERSIZED TO COLOSSAL

First came the oversize cards (2.5 by 4.5 inches), and then came the MasterPrint-size cards (about 6 by 10 inches). Faced with some difficulty in distinguishing between the two, FPG cleverly came up with the name "Colossal" for the larger set, and set about making up a greatest hits box that contains packs of these larger cards from ten of their artists: Kelly, Achilleos, Rowena, Jones, Hescox, Parkinson, Ellmere, Ploog, Maitz, and Sweet. Resisting the urge to call these "comic-size" cards, **Vantage** will avoid everybody's private names for these cards and refer to them as frame-size cards. (Is it too late to trademark the name?) The cards are, as expected, expensive, but at an average price of $6 for a pack of five cards, they are cheaper than the frame-size cards previously offered by Fleer.

What's not clear is how these cards will sell. A complete set is fifty cards, but since there are no chase cards (other than the autographed cards), there is little incentive to buy packs. Some people will just want to buy one or two of their favorite cards and others will simply want to pick up the set (at least until they see that it's going to cost them about $50). The only real reason to buy boxes or packs is to have a chance at the autographed cards, and people are going to be reluctant to do that unless their card dealer has single cards available for trade to help them complete a set (which is unlikely to happen).

The real success story in these boxes is the autographed cards. Each artist signed 100 of the cards, which will make collecting a complete set of ten autographs a challenge roughly comparable to collecting a set of the Conan I holofoils — and nearly as expensive. Be sure to look for these cards early, as you won't be able to find them later.

## OH YES, AND THERE'S A GAME ON THE BACK

Magic the Gathering has already spawned countless collectible card games, but there is also a second kind of "game" showing up from time to time — cards that have a game thrust upon them. Destini Productions commissioned Ed Bear, Jr., who did much of the Magic artwork to do the Flights of Fantasy cards. The set is only 90 cards, and the cards are equally distributed, so much so that Destini guarantees that three sets can be produced from each box. There are three subsets, and there is a storyline (and some sort of game) on the backs of the cards. Don't be misled — the game here is not likely to be any more important (or memorable) than the game in the WildStorm set. The artwork alone will determine if these cards are hot, and it is likely to be sets that sell rather than packs or boxes.

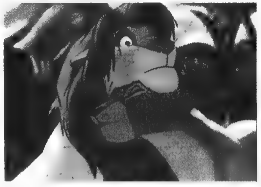
Star Wars™ & © Lucas Films 1994

## STAR CARDS

Is there a limit to the number of cards that Star Wars fans will collect? **Vantage** doesn't think so, and the new Star Wars Widevision cards should help prove the point. The wrinkle this time is that the cards are oversized (2.5 by 4.75 inches) so that the entire picture frame from movie stills can fit on a card. The pictures are scenes from the original movie, but the chase card set is made up of cards that have been painted for the occasion. If these cards sell as expected, we can look forward to many more like them.

Not to be left out in the vacuum, SkyBox is releasing an oversize movie card set of its own, the Star Trek Generations Cinema cards. Slightly smaller than the Star Wars cards (2.5 by 4.5 inches), these cards are also much riskier — Trekkies and Trekkers are much more fickle than the followers of the Force, and the success or failure of the movie these cards are lifted from (the last appearance of the original Star Trek crew?) will greatly impact this card set.

The Lion King™ & © Disney 1994



## HOW MANY LION KING CARDS ARE ENOUGH?

Why head for the movie theater or rent a video when you can stay at home and look at your card sets? Just in time for the re-release of the movie, SkyBox is bringing out the Lion King II cards. This time it's only an 80-card set, but the pop-up and foil chase cards are back again. The first set sold extremely well, and **Vantage** expects that kids of all ages will want a set of these cards also. The cards might be a flash in the pan (nobody will be collecting them again until the movie hits video), and a better long-term bet might be the 16-card set available exclusively from AMC theaters. You should consider stockpiling a few extra sets of these cards if you can find them cheaply, as they aren't something that can be ordered from the factory, and completists of the future will be tearing their hair out trying to find either singles or sets of these limited cards. If you're a completist yourself, don't forget to pick up a Lion King tin set — those cards are the first ones to use the full-size movie picture frames that seem to be all the rage for movie cards this month!

## SPECULATIVE CORNER

The man responsible for what is arguably the most important non-sports card set ever done (the first Marvel Masterpiece cards) is finally back with another set: Joe Jusko's Edgar Rice Burroughs cards. It was the Ace book covers of the sixties that finally helped Frazetta break into the public eye. The book covers featured Tarzan and Pellucidar, and that is exactly the subject matter that FPG has turned Jusko loose on. These art cards should prove extremely popular with the public, and the higher quality card (24 point stock, the same as the Flair cards from earlier this year) couldn't happen to a more deserving set. Taking the hint from the successful chase card sets of the last two Star Wars releases, the six chase cards form a large picture, making completion of the set by a larger audience more important than normal. The higher price of these cards is partially offset by the small size of the set (only sixty cards), but the cost per pack is still much less than some other recent card sets. So why is this set hiding in

the speculative corner? Print runs for FPG releases have so far been much higher than either dealers or the public have demanded, and the excess available stock and repeated solicitations for them has hung over the market for the cards, keeping them from appreciating. Dealers have come to depend on continued availability and inexpensive reorders for the cards, keeping their initial orders much lower than they should be. If the print run on these cards isn't too high, the higher demand for them that **Vantage** expects could quickly deplete supplies, giving FPG its first runaway success. If the print run is set higher than normal, in anticipation of a long sell-off period, then it could be years before the supply runs out — and demand might evaporate first.

## MORE MILK CAPS

You hate them, you can't imagine who wants them, you are in denial about them — but Milk Caps are still coming on strong. Several new sets this month are recognizable, but none are as collectible as the ones that are most likely to turn your stomach.

Images in Foil offers two sets this month, the 266-cap set of Action Caps and The Flintstones Caps Series 1. Each pack of the sets contains five caps and one slammer, and the smaller size and higher profile of the Flintstones set (8 slammers and 54 caps) makes it more collectible.

SkyBox is bringing out The Simpsons SkyCaps, a set of 50 caps and 10 slammers. These are aimed more squarely at the younger crowd that is actively playing that senseless game, and should sell better as well (at least there aren't any smell-o-vision caps yet).

The winner this month is probably Madcaps from Topps. Remember Garbage Pail Kids? What about Wacky Packages? The same type of artwork and (okay, **Vantage** can only think of one word that fits) "gross" subject matter is back. The match-up of the intended market (younger kids) and the subject matter couldn't be more perfect. To make things worse, the caps are all printed using the Topps Finest process, which will make them stand out in a crowd even more — the kids are going to love these caps as much as adults are going to hate them, making them even more sought-after. Yippee.

## QUICK NOTES

Comic Images is offering two Keepsake collections this month, each limited to 2500 copies. The Gil Elvgren set features a half-dozen pinups and a mini press sheet of all six cards, and should sell through and disappear quickly without much of a ripple. A better bet might be the Norman Rockwell Saturday Evening Post Holiday Edition Keepsake Collection, arriving just in time for the holiday seasons. Price guides don't list and track these Keepsake collections, but if they ever start, you'll probably wish you'd picked them up when you had the chance — 2500 copies is not very many at all.

Dr. Who Trading Cards, Series 2 are on their way from Cornerstone Communications and you can expect to have a lot of trouble picking up a set if you don't find them quickly. Seen a box of the Series One cards lately? Don't expect to see many of the second series either after a month or so. While Dr. Who doesn't have the wide market of Star Wars or Star Trek, this veteran Sci-Fi series has a hard-core following and they should eventually push up demand for the early card sets.

Peter Max Premier Art Card Set is something strange — a grand total of six cards. His psychedelic artwork is instantly recognizable, but what kind of collection consists of so few cards? Perhaps this is simply a marketing ploy that will allow the company to sell a ninety-card set for $150 by releasing it as a series of sets.

One last card set is frightening — Street Fighter: The Movie. Even with Jean Claude Van Damme as a featured participant, it is difficult to imagine Upper Deck's release finding more success than the Mortal Kombat cards had. Of course, the F/X and LE chase cards should be spectacular enough that the boxes will sell well once the price per box reaches the same low level that the Valiant and Deathmate boxes now enjoy (about $5 to $10 per box).

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# COMICS ARE FOR READING First!

By Rick Keller

Youngblood™ & © Rob Liefeld 1994

Youngblood is back! Well, sort of. Actually, Youngblood never left. With the titles **Team Youngblood** and **Youngblood Strikefile**, the annuals, specials, and appearances in other books, the members of the team have kept themselves occupied.

What I'm talking about is the long-awaited return of the **Youngblood** title by Rob Liefeld — the comic that was the anchor pin for the Image universe.

You seem confused.

Y'see, there was an initial mini-series, followed by an ongoing series that suddenly halted at issue five. Rob then took a fifteen-month hiatus to become one with the Earth. Actually, he was writing Strikefile, which focused on the solo efforts of the team members, while also refocusing the original title's direction. When he came back, he resumed the series at issue six.

Are you following this?

The results of his hiatus are surprising to those who had previously thought that most of the Image titles were full of heroes with big guns who constantly fought with villains, aliens... or each other. Well, the Youngbloods still fight (although not as much with each other) and they still have the big guns; however, there's also a definite shift in the way the members are portrayed. The focus is more on the team as a working group and as a family — when they're on-duty and when they're on their own time. I guess you could say the book is brighter in its outlook on life than some of the previous issues. For example, issue four of the mini-series seemed very dark: everyone had a scowl on his face. There was a feeling that they were going to their last battle and were never coming back. Even the cover showed the heroes in front of a dark and rain-soaked backdrop.

There's a definite turnaround from that premise. Sure they still face intense dangers, but the heroes no longer hold their emotions in as they prepare for battle. Each has his own definite opinions on what's going to happen. Yes, it's basically a job, but the characters also realize that what they do means something to someone.

The book is also increasing the focus on the traits of some of its most popular characters: Die Hard, Shaft, and Badrock. All have different takes on what roles they play as heroes. Die Hard, the current model of a Die Hard program that builds androids with brains that can download whole human memories, takes his job very seriously. In that, he realizes his own mortality, because if he dies in battle, another bigger and better model will take his place. Shaft, team leader, dislikes it when others decide for him. Yet, if he sees something he likes, he's willing to work to some sort of compromise. Hence, the introduction of three new members to Youngblood's ranks in the comeback issue.

Then there's Badrock, the most popular member of the team, and the one with the most

*The focus is more on the team as a working group and as a family... when they're on-duty and when they're on their own time.*

character. A teenager inside a body made of rock, his motto could probably be 'If you've got it flaunt it.' He's got powers, he enjoys his work, and he loves being in the spotlight; therefore, why not use these factors to do things he could never do when he was a normal kid? Yet, he still understands the duties of being a superhero, and is there with the team when he's needed.

In the three years that Youngblood has been around in some form, Rob Liefeld has transformed his team into a family — each member of that family with a distinct personality. While there's still a lot of action and armaments going around, the **Vantage** reader has an opportunity to look inside each of the heroes to see what makes him tick.

Most of your run-of-the-mill superheroes got their powers from one source or another: Superman from the yellow sun of Earth; Spider-Man from a radioactive spider; Flash from a lightning strike which caused a chemical spill; and so on and so forth. All pretty common occurrences. Well Lee Richards is not so common. You see, he gained his powers from...SATAN! Not a dark spirit, not some type of dark jewel, but from the Dark Lord herself (yes, I did say herself). The weirdest part is that she gave it to Lee by accident! And Lee's not even dead yet! Whoops!

So goes the life of Triad Comics' first superhero, Pulsar, who is currently presented in the comic **Triad Universe: Featuring Pulsar.** If you've never picked up an independent book before, we at **Vantage** recommend you start your journey with this one.

This book definitely puts a new spin on the legacy of a hero. For example, there aren't too many heroes in the comic world who can say they were sucked into Hell while still alive. And I don't know if there are any who can say they slept with the devil herself (well, there was my ex-girlfriend). But Lee Richards does, and he doesn't regret any of it as the story progresses.

*His job is to rid Hell of Satania so a balance of power can be restored and evil doesn't consume the planet. Not much pressure, huh?*

He's not an evil man. In fact, he's recruited by agents of Heaven to help rid Hades of Satanis — the female devil — before she becomes too powerful and takes over the entire Afterworld. Yet he's not totally pure. He's subject to temptation like most of us are, as well as doubts about his new abilities.

This makes him a hero the reader can relate to. Not just because of this, but also because o the premise creator Laurence Richardson and writer J. Harrington have put Pulsar in. Frankly he has some pretty tough odds to beat. He's th sole super-powered being on the Earth, and with only limited help, his job is to rid Hell of Satani so a balance of power can be restored and evi doesn't consume the planet. Not too much pressure, huh?

Yes, it's comics at its finest; however, you'v probably put yourself in that role several times OK, you haven't been sent out to defeat evi incarnate, but you've definitely had the feelin that insurmountable odds were piling up at wor or at home, and you've overcome them by givin it your best. Sometimes giving it more than you best.

This is the plight of Pulsar. He's one man. A of a sudden the world is heaped onto his shoulder and he's told to do his best or the world basicall falls into the hands of evil. Even with all the doub that fill his mind, he still decides to suck it up an give it his 110 percent. Readers can't help but fe some compassion towards Lee and the big shoe he has to fill. The reader is rooting for him ever step of the way, and hoping he makes it. If he do overcome these difficult obstacles it creates feeling that the reader may be able to overcom overwhelming circumstances someday as well.

Sure the comic is fantasy, but take away th powers and Lee Richards is just like any one us. Creating a hero readers can relate to is th goal of many writers. Pulsar is that hero.

*Publishers kindly forward review material to:*
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# GOLDEN AGE PICKS

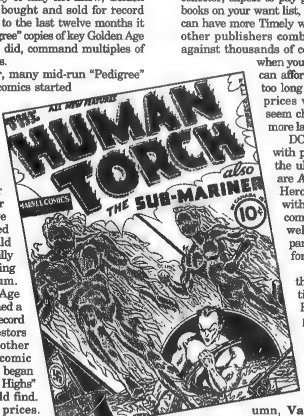
by Bill Ponseti

Greetings comic lovers!

This is the inaugural edition of what will hopefully be a new monthly column, designed to cater to the world of Golden Age comic collecting. In this forum, **Vantage** will attempt to give all of you a brief overview of the most rapidly-changing, exciting area of comics today.

As most of you may or may not know, Golden Age comics are being bought and sold for record prices every day. Prior to the last twelve months it was only the rare "Pedigree" copies of key Golden Age books that would, and did, command multiples of then current guide levels.

Shortly thereafter, many mid-run "Pedigree" copies of Golden Age comics started surfacing from private collections and they too began to sell for many multiples of guide. There was still a strong resistance on the part of most Golden Age collectors to enter this foray. The popular wisdom was that if we were patient and looked hard enough, we would be able to find an equally nice copy without paying the extra premium.




Once the Silver Age comics had sort of reached a peak in prices, after a record year of increases, investors started to search for other investment-quality comic books. At first, they too began buying up all the "Mile Highs" and Larsons they could find. Again, for record prices.

A logical order of progression led collectors to scoop up the remaining non-pedigree, high-grade pieces that could be found. This, too, helped inflate prices for these types of books. Let's face it, Golden Age comics really are tough to find in high-grade, unrestored condition. People have been forced to lower their standards — settling for lower grade books.

In fact, many collectors have given up hope of putting together a full run of their favorite title in high grade strictly due to these factors. There is only so much Golden Age product available in any grade, so if you're willing to settle for less market potential, why not be happy with just getting your favorite books?

Now to some more specifics: If you are a Timely collector, expect to pay guide or over for any of the books on your want list, regardless of grade. Dealers can have more Timely want lists on file than for all other publishers combined! You are competing against thousands of collectors and investors, so when you find a book you need, if you can afford it, buy it! They don't last too long with any dealer. The high prices we are paying now could seem cheap in a year, so why pay more later?

DC titles remain strong as ever with pre-Robin **Detectives** being the ultimate prizes. Next in line are **Actions** #1-10 and any Pre-Hero anthologies. More **Funs** with a Spectre cover routinely command over guide prices as well. Dealers have to be prepared to pay 60-250% of guide for most Golden Age books!

The ones to watch for the near future are early Fox titles and high-grade early Fawcetts. **Vantage** knows people have been predicting a Fawcett explosion for some time, but some dealers are reporting a dramatic increase in Fawcett sales and requests.

Each month in this column, **Vantage** will analyze the Golden Age market as impartially as possible in order to bring you a useful guide on where to put your Golden Age dollar. Yes, next month we'll bring you actual Golden Age picks!

However, the first rule of thumb should always be, buy what you love, and set your sights realistically. Until next time, we'll be keeping an eye on things for you.

Human Torch and Sub-Mariner™ & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

# MIKE GRELL

## The Traveling Comic Man

*"I consider myself to be a storyteller."*

Mike Grell is the quintessential nice guy in the comics industry. Rather than Image-bash after being kicked out a year ago, Grell is content to return to the Image fold with nothing but kind words for the company.

"Image has gone through a lot of growth and maturity," the creator-owner of Shaman's Tears said. He insistently pointed out that Image Publisher Larry Marder and Editor Mike Gold had been so helpful to him.

Grell plans on returning to some of his earliest published work. He hopes to sign a contract soon with a publisher to do **John Sable Freelance.** Said Grell, "I'm looking forward to working on that guy again."

Grell said Sable was a favorite of his. "I had written this blood-and-guts character with a lot of humor. " Grell perked up as he talked about the character's mid-life crisis, and "his human level."

**Starslayer,** another former title originally published by Pacific Comics, is also due to come back. There will be a reprint of those old treasures.

"It will be the first six issues of **Starslayer** as they were presented twelve years ago, with re-writing, re-lettering, and re-coloring." Any chance of a new original **Starslayer** series? "Absolutely!"

"I would very much like to attract new readers," said Grell, who is well known for his past work. "I consider myself to be a storyteller."

**Vantage** asked Grell if he purposely creates the sweeping, cinematic panels he is known for. "The general approach I've taken t comics is that I try to make it as much like a movie as possible."

On **Warlord,** "I wrote that book as close t a formula as it could possibly be. The title pag was always a two-page spread."

Grell added that **Sable & The Cat,** wit John Sable returning in his own series, is als still in search of a publisher.

Shaman's Tears™ & © 1994 Mike Gr

# THE VIEW FROM OBLIVION

By Corey Bond

Dark Horse Comics had two movies in theaters during the Summer of '94, **The Mask** and **Timecop**, both of which, at the very least, are better than Dark Horse Productions' first silver screen effort, **Dr. Giggles.**

Which isn't to say that I was not immensely disappointed in the film version of **The Mask.** Like the Steven Spielberg adaptation of the intense and thought-provoking Michael Crichton novel **Jurassic Park,** the translation of **The Mask** from comic to movie involved having it "Disneyfied," which is how I refer to taking a perfectly good adult-oriented story and watering it down until it is suitable for the entire family.

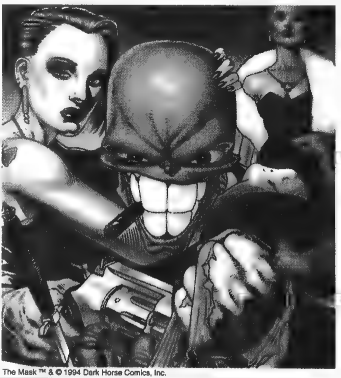
Additionally, the special effects crew seemed to be much too impressed with their live-action computer renditions of Warner Brothers cartoon effects; so much so that the overuse of these effects eclipsed the screen time of comedic genius Jim Carrey, whose talent was never utilized to its full potential in the film. All things considered, I found Carrey's **Ace Ventura: Pet Detective** to be a more entertaining diversion (a movie, by the way, described by Peter David as an early sign of the Apocalypse).

But enough about **The Mask.** Dark Horse's other summer offering, **Timecop,** presents me with the opportunity to indulge in one of my absolute favorite pastimes: analyzing the flaws in time-travel stories.

Others will attest to this obsession. Don't get me started on the discrepancies between the two **Terminator** movies, or between the films in the **Back to the Future** trilogy. And those movies were fairly tightly written, for mainstream science fiction. Now along comes **Timecop,** a time travel blowout rife with plot holes big enough to drive a DeLorean through.

Timecop's conception of time travel is presented in a scene where the Senate Oversight Committee is being asked to approve government funding for the Time Enforcement Commission, or TEC for short. A scientist has perfected time travel, and the government is convinced that they need an agency to police it, lest foreign governments or terrorist groups use it against the United States, or accidentally destroy mankind altogether.

This is a noble enough motive, I suppose, although no one ever comes out and says that the time travel technology has been leaked to any foreign agency, leaving the audience to wonder why it is perceived as a threat.



The Mask™ & © 1994 Dark Horse Comics, Inc.

The rules of time travel in this film are simple (as opposed to the rules of time travel in the DC Universe, but that's a topic for another time). "You can't go forward in time," it is explained to the Committee and the audience, "because the future hasn't happened yet."

Now as far as I know, most mod-

ern science fiction conceives of time as a continuum, with no fixed point being an "absolute present." But I'm not going to nitpick on a detail that was obviously tossed into the dialogue as a plot device to keep the audience from asking why the TEC doesn't patrol the future as well.

My first real problem involves a piece of dialogue concerning the evidence that time travel is already being abused. Some gold bullion recovered from an arms deal is discovered to be stamped 'Confederate Army, 1863." The Committee is told that the gold has been carbon dated and authenticated.

First of all, gold cannot be carbon dated. Secondly, if gold could be carbon dated, what difference would it make? Carbon dating is used to determine an object's age. Was the gold created in 1863? Of course not. So if you carbon date gold, how would knowing the gold's age prove that it had traveled from 1863 to 1994 (the year time travel was invented)? Were they claiming to have figured out the absolute age of all gold, proving that this particular shipment of gold was 131 years younger than average gold?

Okay, so I'm still nitpicking. Let's move on to the crux of the film, the Time Enforcement Commission. This is a government agency devoted to policing time. The TEC officers work in a department where reality is altered (and, theoretically,

*"One of my absolute favorite pastimes: analyzing the flaws in time-travel stories."*

restored) on a daily basis. Yet they repeatedly seem surprised by even the most minute alterations i history.

Come on, these people deal with time trave day in, day out. Time anomalies should be as rou tine to a timecop as a speeding ticket. TEC shoul have a policy where every time an agent return from a mission in the past, he or she must g through a debriefing about their own lives to en sure that they are up to speed on any changes tha messing with history might have caused.

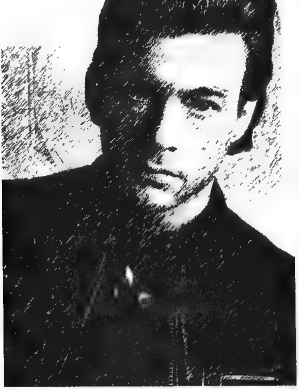
Instead, the TEC agents blunder about in th past and then return to the present, expecting n consequences worse that having to file a repor on their assignment before calling it a day. Eve though **Timecop** is a movie about the perils an catastrophes involved in time travel, it depicts th Time Enforcement Commission as running wa too smoothly.

Worse than the TEC's policies would seem t be its methods. The first time you see a timeco in action is a scene in which Max Walker (playe by Jean-Claude Van Damme) goes back in time t a Depression-era Wall Street office where his ex partner Atwood, having gone bad, is purchasin stocks that will be valuable in 2004. Atwood r sists, and violence ensues.

Walker beats up two security guards (inclu ing clubbing one painfully in the groin... I hop he wasn't supposed to father any historically-in portant children) and Atwood opens fire with 21st-century handgun. Walker gets his man, course, but no mention is made of the dozens 21st-century bullets embedded in the walls of th office, which will no doubt be recovered by th police for evidence. Nor does TEC do anything restore the changes that Atwood was there to mak in the first place.

Tell me, is this being thorough? Shouldn't TE have some sort of clean-up crew that goes in ar repairs the time stream after the time-travelin criminals are apprehended? Surely we are n meant to believe that simply apprehending th bad guy puts everything right?

While we're trashing the TEC, let's discu their equipment. To travel back in time, the agen climb into a rocket car that whizzes down a tra and vaporizes shortly before the rocket, und normal circumstances, would slam into a ste



wall. Back in history, the agents step into the past as though they were passing through a doorway.

When they are ready to return to the present, they step back through the portal, and the rocket car reappears on the tracks of the time tunnel with the agents secure inside. Someone please explain to me how the people get from a sitting position into a standing position and vice-versa during the time transference, and furthermore, please tell me where the rocket car disappears to for the duration of the mission.

It's as if the special effects crew couldn't decide whether they preferred the **Back to the Future** method of time travel, where the car has to achieve 88 mph, or the **Terminator** method, where the person is simply zapped through a portal, so they ended up with an unworkable compromise.

Additionally, the accuracy of the time-travel equipment is wildly inconsistent. In the Wall Street scene, Walker is deposited neatly in Atwood's office. Later on, Walker and his new partner are accidentally dropped into a lake. At least I assume it was an accident. I suppose it could have been a clever ploy to show Walker's female partner in a wet t-shirt.

The TEC's primary concern about the dangers of time travel seem to revolve around the theory that the same matter can't occupy the same space at the same time. In other words, they worry about the consequences of a TEC agent going back in time and meeting himself or herself. This seemed like a valid concern to me when it was first voiced, rather reminiscent of Ego Spengler's "Don't cross the streams!" ultimatum from **Ghostbusters.**

One might imagine that the fabric of the universe could unravel should a man come into contact with an earlier version of himself. Yet, what is Walker's solution for disposing of **Timecop's** arch villain?

That's right, he tosses an earlier version of the man at him, so that the two can fuse together into a puddle of primordial goo and seep away. He does this with no justification, or (unlike the conclusion of **Ghostbusters,** where they decided that crossing the streams would cause the pretonic reversal necessary to close the doorway to Gozer's dimension) even a good theory about what might happen as a result. What was he thinking?

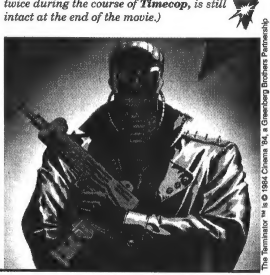
And speaking of the villain, he is yet another example of a person willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of an alternate version of himself in another time line. These characters never seem to make the connection that even if a different version of you lives on in an alternate reality, you are still dead. Call me selfish, but I believe that basic human instinct for survival would prevent much of this sort of behavior.

Nevertheless, for all my complaints, I would still recommend **Timecop** to any readers who enjoy action movies with good fight scenes and special effects. The characters are likable and interesting, and a few shortcomings in the story can be overlooked when the audience is rooting for the good guys to come out on top.

I simply expected better science fiction elements from a screenplay credited to comic writer Mark Verheiden, who has given us such excellent stories in the past.

Star Trek fans may find that the time travel/love story aspects of **Timecop** remind them of the dilemma that Riker and Troi face in the novel **Imzadi.** And some readers might take my friend Susan's position and argue that all of the above criticisms are irrelevant in comparison to seeing Van Damme's butt.

*(Corey Bond, humor columnist and comics retailer, wishes he could send this column back in time so that it would arrive at **Vantage** before his deadline. [Hey, it happens. Next time, though, we'll kill you and let your alternate live. -Editor] He would also like to know why Van Damme's house, which we got to watch explode twice during the course of **Timecop,** is still intact at the end of the movie.)*



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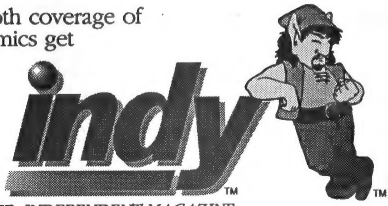


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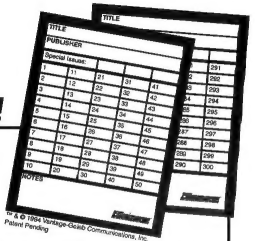


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